

National School Lunch/School Breakfast Program

INTRODUCTION



The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) are federally assisted programs operating in public schools, nonprofit private schools, and public or private nonprofit licensed residential child care centers. These programs provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to children each school day. The U. S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (USDA FNS) administers the programs at the federal level. At the State level, the nutrition programs are administered by the Maryland State Department of Education, School and Community Nutrition Programs Branch (MSDE SCNPB), which operates the program through agreements with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs).

Local Educational Agencies that choose to take part in the nutrition programs receive cash reimbursements and donated commodities from the USDA, and in some cases State funds, for each meal they serve. In return, they must serve meals that meet federal requirements, and they must offer free and reduced-price lunches to eligible children. Local Educational Agencies can also be reimbursed for offering nutritious snacks to children through age 18 in after-school or enrichment programs.

The NSLP and SBP have been instrumental in addressing child nutrition issues, especially hunger. For millions of children across America, the NSLP and SBP make a substantial and essential contribution to a child's daily nutrient intake. Over a week's time, school lunch provides at least 33% of a student's Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein, calcium, iron, Vitamin A, and Vitamin C; school breakfast provides at least 25%. This dedication to good health is particularly important during a time when childhood obesity and obesity-related illness are on the rise for our nation's youth.

ELIGIBILITY OF CHILDREN



Children attending a participating LEA site may purchase a meal through the NSLP and the SBP, provided the LEA has been approved for both programs. Children from families with incomes at or below 130 % of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 % 185 % of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which children can be charged no more than 40 cents for lunch and 30 cents for breakfast. Children from families with incomes over 185 % of the poverty level will pay full-price for their meals, though meals are still subsidized to some extent.

After-school snacks are provided to children on the same income eligibility basis as school meals. However, programs that operate in areas where at least 50 % of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals serve all snacks free.

NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

School meals must meet the applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend that no more than 30% of an individual's calories come from fat, and less than 10% from saturated fat. Regulations also establish a standard for school lunches to provide one-third of the RDAs of protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories.

School meals must meet federal nutrition requirements, but decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made by LEAs.



Benefits

- **Children have access to nutritious meals throughout the school year.**

Children who are well nourished are more prepared to start their day and may perform better academically and socially. Children are also exposed to sound educational experiences for developing healthy eating behaviors.

- **Monthly reimbursements to help subsidize all food service costs.**

The LEA will receive cash reimbursement based on the number of lunches, breakfasts, and/or snacks served to eligible children. The rate of reimbursement is adjusted annually.

- **USDA Commodities help lower food costs and increase the nutritional content of meals.**

An LEA has the option to receive USDA donated commodities. The amount of commodities an LEA will receive is based on the number of lunches served.

- **Training and Technical Assistance**

Nutrition education workshops and training materials are available and offered yearly to participating LEAs, food service personnel, students, and teachers. The MSDE provides resources in the area of nutrition, nutrition education, food safety, and food service management.

Assistance is provided throughout the year from a Staff Specialist, who will assist the LEA through the application process, record keeping requirements, reporting requirements, reimbursement reports, and the development of menus that meet federal requirements.

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Rev 8/05